

Radon

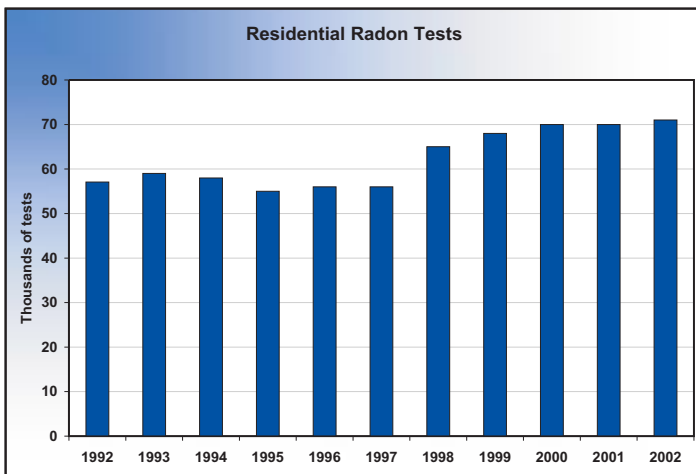
Background

Radon is a naturally-occurring radioactive gas that is invisible and odorless, found in soil everywhere in varying concentrations. Radon gas moves through the soil beneath a building and may seep through cracks or other openings in the foundation. A simple test can determine if a building has elevated radon levels.

Radon comes from the decay of radioactive materials; over time radon further decays, producing new radioactive materials. These radon decay products can attach to indoor air particles, such as dust and cigarette smoke. When inhaled, they may become trapped in the lungs, where they emit radiation. This radiation can damage lung tissue and increase the risk of lung cancer. In fact, long term exposure to radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States.¹ In New Jersey, long term exposure to radon may be responsible for over 200 lung cancer deaths each year.

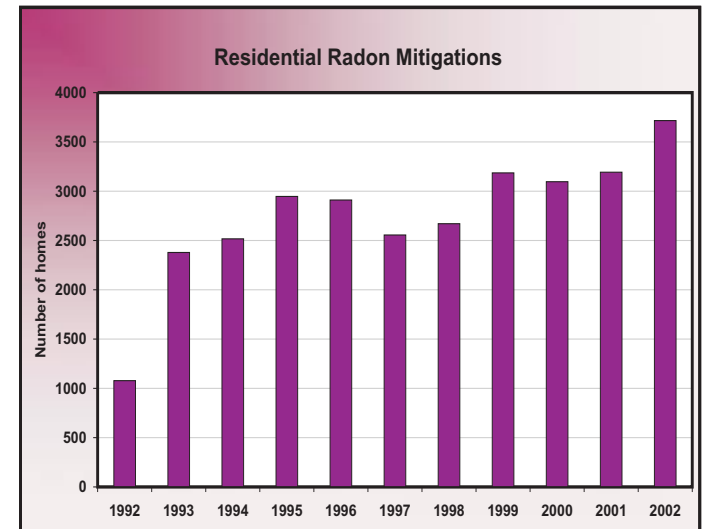
Status and Trends

During 2002, approximately 71,000 radon tests were conducted and 3,700 radon mitigation systems installed in New Jersey. (See "Residential Radon Tests" and "Residential Radon Mitigations" below). As these figures show,



the number of radon tests remained relatively constant from 1993 through 1997, with an increase in 1998 through 2002. This increase was a result of a stronger real estate market, with more buyers

requesting radon testing, and greater outreach to the real estate community. The cumulative number of residential mitigation installations around the state reached a total of 30,254 in 2002, helping to reduce radon exposure in even more homes.



Outlook and Implications

Ten years after the implementation of the mandatory certification program for radon testers and mitigators, the emphasis on testing and mitigation remains strong in New Jersey. This is the case even though radon testing of homes is voluntary. There are no legal requirements for a homeowner to test for radon. Both a strong outreach program and testing conducted with real estate transactions are the key factors responsible for sustained radon testing and mitigation.

More Information

Extensive information on radon testing and mitigation can be obtained from the NJDEP Division of Environmental Safety and Health, radon section. See www.nj.gov/dep/rpp/radon/index.htm.

References

Except as noted below, all information herein is from the NJDEP Division of Environmental Safety and Health.

¹ National Cancer Institute, 2004, http://cis.nci.nih.gov/fact/3_52.htm